

REMARKS

The Office Action dated May 20, 2004, has been carefully reviewed and the foregoing amendment has been made in response thereto. Claims 2, 13, and 16 have been canceled. Claims 1, 3-12, 14, 15, and 17 are pending in the application.

The rejection of claims 1, 3-7, 9-12, 14, 15, and 17 under 35 USC 102(e) as being unpatentable over Buck et al is respectfully traversed. Amended independent claims 1, 12, and 16 recite that if a respective firewall is in place between the called user and the internetwork, then it is detected whether a respective firewall is in place between the calling user and the internetwork. If a respective firewall is not in place between the calling user and the internetwork, then the calling user's respective global address is transmitted to the called user and the called user establishes a network session for the connection with the calling user by transmitting to the calling user's respective global address. Thus, in view of the discovered firewall configuration, the present invention dynamically reverses the roles of the users' computers for establishing the direct (peer to peer) network session.

The recited limitations are neither shown nor suggested by Buck. Buck does not and cannot establish a network session directly between the calling user and the called user. Buck concerns the use of a gateway to act as a proxy to echo network packets between users (see Figures 5-12 and paragraph 0057, for example), with the gateway performing re-packaging of packets between TCP and UDP protocols in order to pass through certain firewalls. Bypassing of the gateway server in Buck is only possible when the firewalls present do not interfere with the UDP protocol (see paragraph 0055) and when the firewall does not perform network address translation (see the second note in Table 1). The present invention overcomes the problem of NAT being performed in the called user's firewall by having the called user's computer establish the network session. Buck is incapable of doing so. Thus, claims 1, 3-7, 9-12, 14, 15, and 17 are allowable.

The rejection of claim 8 under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Buck in view of AAPA is respectfully traversed. The AAPA describes network address translation, but does not suggest how an application outside a NAT firewall can determine that the NAT firewall exists. The purpose of a NAT firewall is to hide the actual equipment address of the protected user from users in the network outside the firewall. None of the header fields of a network packet passing out through a NAT firewall would contain the actual equipment address, since this would defeat the purpose of NAT. Therefore, the prior art contains no suggestion of any method for detecting the presence of the NAT firewall. In the present invention, special steps must be taken in order to make the actual equipment address available to the central server so that the recited comparison can be made. For example, the application running on the protected user's computer which interacts with the central server causes the actual equipment address to be sent as data during the registration process. Since nothing in either Buck or the AAPA suggests the recited address comparison for determining the presence of a NAT firewall, claim 8 is allowable.

In view of the foregoing amendment and remarks, claims 1, 3-12, 14, 15, and 17 are now in condition for allowance. Favorable action is respectfully solicited.

Respectfully submitted,



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